NUMB. CCLXVII.

e SPECTATOR.

dite Romani Scriptores, cedite Graii. Propert.

Saturday, January 5. 1712.

HERE is nothing in Nature ſo irkſom general Diſcourſes, eſpecially when turn chiefly upon Words. For this ſon I ſhall wave the Diſcuſſion of that was ſtarted ſome Years ſince, Whe- *Paradiſe Loſt* may be called an Thoſe who will not give it that call it (if they pleaſe) a Divine Poem. ficient to its Perfection, if it has in it of the higheſt kind of Poetry; and who ſay it is not an Heroick Poem, more to the Diminution of it, than by *Adam* is not *Æneas*, nor *Eve*

fore examine it by the Rules of Epic Poe- ether it falls ſhort of the *Iliad* or *Æneid* which are eſſential to that kind of Writ- ing to be conſidered in an Epic Poem, is ich it is perfect or imperfect, according which it relates is more or leſs ſo. ſhould have three Qualifications in it. be but one Action. Secondly, It ſhould Action; and Thirdly, It ſhould be a great conſider the Action of the *Iliad*, *Æneid*, *Loſt* in theſe three ſeveral Lights. *Homer* Unity of his Action haſtens into the as *Horace* has obſerved: Had he gone Egg, or begun much later, even at *elen*, or the Inveſting of *Troy*, it is ma- Story of the Poem would have been veral Actions. He therefore opens his the Diſcord of his Princes, and with weaves in the ſeveral ſucceeding parts count of every thing which relates to had paſſed before that fatal Diſſenſion. manner *Æneas* makes his firſt ap- the *Tyrrhene* Seas, and within ſight of the Action propoſed to be celebrated Settling himſelf in *Latium*. But be- ceſſary for the Reader to know what to him in the taking of *Troy*, and in parts of his Voyage, *Virgil* makes his way of Epiſode in the ſecond and the *Æneid*. The Contents of both come before thoſe of the firſt Book in Story, tho' for the preſerving of Action, they follow them in the Diſ- Poem. *Milton*, in Imitation of theſe opens his *Paradiſe Loſt* with an plotting the Fall of Man, which is propoſed to celebrate; and as for which preceded in point of time, Angels, and the Creation of the would have entirely deſtroyed the U- Action, had he related them in the they happened) he caſt them into ſeventh Books, by way of Epiſode

Ariſtotle himſelf allows, that *Homer* has nothing to boaſt of as to the Unity of his Fable, tho' at the ſame time that great Critick and Philoſopher endeavours to palliate this Imperfection in the *Greek* Poet, by imputing it in ſome Meaſure to the very Nature of an Epic Poem. Some have been of Opinion, that the *Æneid* labours alſo in this particular, and has Epiſodes which may be looked upon as Excreſcencies rather than as Parts of the Action. On the contrary, the Poem which we have now under our Conſideration, hath no other Epiſodes than ſuch as naturally ariſe from the Subject, and yet is filled with ſuch a multitude of aſtoniſhing Circumſtances, that it gives us at the ſame time a Pleaſure of the greateſt Variety, and of the greateſt Simplicity.

I muſt obſerve alſo, that as *Virgil* in the Poem which was deſigned to celebrate the Original of the *Roman* Empire, has deſcribed the Birth of its great Rival, the *Carthaginian* Commonwealth. *Milton* with the like Art in his Poem on the Fall of Man, has related the Fall of thoſe Angels who are his profeſſed Enemies. Beſides the many other Beauties in ſuch an Epiſode, it's running Parallel with the great Action of the Poem, hinders it from breaking the Unity ſo much as another Epiſode would have done, that had not ſo great an Affinity with the principal Subject. In ſhort, this is the ſame kind of Beauty which the Criticks admire in the *Spaniſh Fryar*, or the *Double Diſcovery*, where the two different Plots look like Counterparts and Copies of one another.

The ſecond Qualification required in the Action of an Epic Poem is, that it ſhould be an *entire* Action: An Action is entire when it is compleat in all its Parts; or as *Ariſtotle* deſcribes it, when it conſiſts of a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. Nothing ſhould go before it, be intermix'd with it, or follow after it, that is not related to it. As on the contrary, no ſingle Step ſhould be omitted in that juſt and regular Progreſs which it muſt be ſuppoſed to take from its Original to its Conſummation. Thus we ſee the Anger of *Achilles* in its Birth, its Continuance and Effects; and *Æneas*'s Settlement in *Italy*, carried on through all the Oppoſitions in his way to it both by Sea and Land. The Action in *Milton* excels (I think) both the former in this particular; we ſee it contrived in Hell, executed upon Earth, and puniſhed by Heaven. The parts of it are told in the moſt diſtinct manner, and grow out of one another in the moſt natural Method.

The third Qualification of an Epic Poem is its *Greatneſs*. The Anger of *Achilles* was of ſuch Conſequence, that it embroiled the Kings of *Greece*, deſtroy'd the Heroes of *Troy*, and engaged all the Gods in Factions. *Æneas*'s Settlement in *Italy* produced the *Cæſars*, and gave Birth to the *Roman* Empire. *Milton*'s Subject was ſtill greater than either of the former; it does not determine the Fate of ſingle Perſons or Nations, but of a whole Species. The

united

united Powers of Hell are joyned together for the Deſtruction of Mankind, which they effected in part, and would have completed, had not Omnipotence it ſelf interpoſed. The principal Actors are Man in his greateſt Perfection, and Woman in her higheſt Beauty. Their Enemies are the fallen Angels: The Meſſiah their Friend, and the Almighty their Protector. In ſhort, every thing that is great in the whole Circle of Being, whether within the Verge of Nature, or out of it, has a proper Part aſſigned it in this noble Poem.

In Poetry, as in Architecture, not only the whole, but the principal Members, and every part of them, ſhould be Great. I will not preſume to ſay, that the Book of Games in the *Æneid*, or that in the *Iliad*, are not of this nature, nor to reprehend *Virgil*'s Simile of a Top, and many other of the ſame nature in the *Iliad*, as liable to any Cenſure in this Particular; but I think we may ſay, without offence to thoſe wonderful Performances, that there is an unqueſtionable Magnificence in every Part of *Paradiſe Loſt*, and indeed a much greater than could have been formed upon any Pagan Syſtem.

But *Ariſtotle*, by the Greatneſs of the Action, does not only mean that it ſhould be great in its Nature, but alſo in its Duration, or in other Words, that it ſhould have a due length in it, as well as what we properly call Greatneſs. The juſt Meaſure of this kind of Magnitude, he explains by the following Similitude. An Animal, no bigger than a Mite, cannot appear perfect to the Eye, becauſe the Sight takes it in at once, and has only a confuſed Idea of the whole, and not a diſtinct Idea of all its Parts; If on the contrary you ſhould ſuppoſe an Animal of ten thouſand Furlongs in length, the Eye would be ſo filled with a ſingle Part of it, that it could not give the Mind an Idea of the whole. What theſe Animals are to the Eye, a very ſhort or a very long Action would be to the Memory. The firſt would be, as it were, loſt and ſwallowed up by it, and the other difficult to be contained in it. *Homer* and *Virgil* have ſhewn their principal Art in this Particular; the Action of the *Iliad*, and that of the *Æneid*, were in themſelves exceeding ſhort, but are ſo beautifully extended and diverſified by the Intervention of *Epiſodes*, and the Machinery of Gods, with the like Poetical Ornaments, that they make up an agreeable Story ſufficient to employ the Memory without overcharging it. *Milton*'s Action is enriched with ſuch a variety of Circumſtances, that I have taken as much Pleaſure in reading the Contents of his Books, as in the beſt invented Story I ever met with. It is poſſible, that the Traditions on which the *Iliad* and *Æneid* were built, had more Circumſtances in them than the Hiſtory of *the Fall of Man*, as it is related in Scripture. Beſides it was eaſier for *Homer* and *Virgil* to daſh the Truth with Fiction, as they were in no danger of offending the Religion of their Country by it. But as for *Milton*, he had not only a very few Circumſtances upon which to raiſe his Poem, but was alſo obliged to proceed with the greateſt Caution in every thing that he added out of his own Invention. And, indeed, notwithſtanding all the Reſtraints he was under, he has filled his Story with ſo many ſurpriſing Incidents, which bear ſo cloſe an Analogy with what is delivered in Holy Writ, that it is capable of pleaſing the moſt delicate Reader, without giving Offence to the moſt ſcrupulous.

The Modern Criticks have collected from ſeveral Hints in the *Iliad* and *Æneid* the Space of Time, which is taken up by the Action of each of thoſe
Poems; but as a great Part of *Milto*
tranſacted in Regions that lie out of
the Sun and the Sphere of Day, it is
gratifie the Reader with ſuch a Calcu
indeed would be more curious th
none of the Criticks, either Ancient
having laid down Rules to circumſcri
of an Epic Poem with any determin
Years, Days or Hours.

This piece of Criticiſm on Milton's Paradiſe
ſhall be carried on in following Papers.

ERRATA.

At the End of the laſt Thurſday's
place C.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

By Her Majeſty's Company of Come

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane
ſent Saturday, the 5th Day of January, will
Comedy call'd, Rule a Wife, and have a Wit. Writ
and Fletcher. The part of Leon by Mr. Powell, the
by Mr. Wilks, Eſtifania by Mrs. Oldfield, Cacafogo
Margaretta by Mrs. Knight, Altea by Mrs. Bicknell,
Mr. Norris. To which will be added a Farce of
called The School-Boy; or, The Comical Rivals.

By SUBSCRIPTION.

AT the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Ma
preſent Saturday, being the 5th Day of January, wi
the laſt new Opera called Antiochus. Tickets will
Mrs. White's Chocolate-houſe this Day. The Fir
Gallery 2 s. The Boxes upon the Stage 15 Shillings.
actly at Six.

Loſt on Monday the 24th of December la
Weſtminſter, a Lap Spaniel Dog, of a dark Liver
his Head all brown, only white about his Noſe and
Ears, a full Tail, and his Hair curling: Whoever
Wavill's, a Surgeon in Orange-ſtreet near Red
Notice of him ſo that he may be had again, ſhall

At the Mountain Wine-Cellar under
South-Sea Coffee-houſe in Broad-ſtreet, is ſold by
Mountain Malaga Wine at 6 s. 8 d. per Gallon or 1 s.
and Red Viana Wine at 13 d. per Bottle; ſuch Perſons
Gallons ſhall pay but 12 s. there being 13 Bottles,
and pure from the Grape.

Whereas Mr. Fert, French Dancing-
has lately taken the great Dancing Room at the cor
Soho, Teaches there every Monday, Wedneſday, and
Ladies or Gentlemen deſire to be Taught at their ow
him he will Wait upon them.

Dr. Byfield's Sal Oleoſum Volatile;
by the Authority of her Majeſty's moſt gracious Lett
the Great Seal of Great Britain, is diſpenſed and ſold
and Retail at his Houſe in Saliſbury Court near
ſome Account of its Nature and Uſe in Diet, Medi
Wines and other ſpirituous Liquors, may be had gra
ragement given to Exporters and Retailers.

There is now in the Preſs, and will
liſhed, A Mathematical Analyſis of all Games depending on
ſlated from the Celebrated French Treatiſe of Mr. Le Mon
dition in Quarto, 1708. Together with a Supplement
ment of the ſame Subject and Argument, in the Rules
Chance. Written by that Excellent Analyſt, Mr. Le
Tranſlated from the Latin Diſſertation in the Philoſo
ons of January, February and March 1711, No. 329.
of Geometry in ten Books, Written by his Royal
phin of France, when Duke of Burgundy, done
the Paris Edition, 1705. All three Tranſlated by
Army.

This Day is Publiſh'd,

Dr. Tilly's Sermon on the Parable of th
Preached before the Lord Mayor, November 11, 1711.
Hiſtorical Account of the Heathen Gods and Heroes;
Underſtanding of the Ancient Poets. Being an
ever has been hitherto written by the Greek, Lat
gliſh Authors upon that Subject. By Dr. King,
ex Ovidii Faſtis, per Thomam Johnſon, uſui Sch
price 1 s. All Mr. Farquhar's Comedies, price 6 s.
Art of getting pretty Children, price 1 s. 6 d. The
derdale's Tranſlation of Virgil, price 5 s. All Print
Linton at the Croſs Keys between the two Temple
ſtreet. Where may be had Mr. Steele's three Com
and Madam Dacier's Homer Tranſlated into Engliſh,
2 s. 6 d.

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Sold by *A. Baldwin* in *Warwick-Lane*; where Advertiſements are
as alſo by *Charles Lillie*, Perfumer, at the Corner of *Beauford-Build*